



REV. JAMES J. MURPHY,

Born at Rathdrum, County Wicklow, Ireland, December, 26th, 1841.

Died December 4th, 1875.

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HENRY GRATTAN
AND
THE IRISH VOLUNTEERS
OF 1782.

LAST LECTURE OF THE LATE

REV. JAMES J. MURPHY,

DELIVERED IN THE

MECHANICS' HALL, MONTREAL,

Monday Evening, Nov 22nd, 1873.

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FATHER MURPHY'S LECTURE

ON

“Grattan and the Irish Volunteers of 1782”

IN THE

MECHANICS' HALL, MONTREAL,

Monday Eve., Nov. 22, 1875.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—The poet Pope with whose infallibility I am glad to say I am not concerned this evening has announced that “the proper study of mankind is man”; and the poet Browning, of whom I should like to speak to you at some other time, has recorded that on the earth there is nothing worth seeing but a human soul. The announcements are substantially the same, and they are both true. A great man is the greatest of all earthly productions, and to see a great man is the greatest of all merely earthly blessings. Our better brother he it is that can make us good. Godhood in human shape—He it is that can lift us to heaven.

Now a great man I have this evening to let you see. Not by merely telling you his history and repeating little anecdotes of his life can my object be accomplished. They are interesting and they are useful too; but unless they have been employed as so many windows through which to catch a vein of his naked soul, for all the high purposes of instruction they will be found to fail. In this latter office only have I employed, in this latter purpose will I to-night employ them. For this lecture as for all the lectures which I address to the inhabitants of Montreal, I have prepared myself with much labour and sore anxiety as one who knows he is addressing a cultivated and generous people, whose cultivation should seem to be

against the imbecility of platitude and whose generosity should secure them against the imprudence of deception. As I myself through all the varied light which speech and story, history and biography, have shed on Henry Grattan, have managed for my own bettering to get to see him, so also shall I to the best of my ability present him to you now.

It is, so please you, Ladies and Gentlemen, not the year of grace 1875, but the year of grace 1782; not an evening towards the close of a rigorous November, but an evening towards the close of a genial May; and we are, so please you, not in Montreal on the banks of the St. Lawrence, but far across the seas in Dublin on the banks of the Liffey. I am, after many wanderings, again at home, and there, ten miles away, my own mountains, strong and stern, gaunt and grim, gather up their hearts to ponder as they pondered in the days of Art MacMorrough and Fiack MacHugh, and out beyond them stretch those Wexford fields where large limbed men are toiling quiet, homely, but with dreadful purpose in their mouths and eyes. But on this evening of more than ninety years ago it is the city itself that I come to see. Its streets are literally packed with noisy masses of excited people, and no matter in what way we walk, we find the masses all converging in one set direction and the centre to which all bear is that magnificent reproduction of Grecian art, the Parliament House on College Green. But it is not the vast numbers of hurrying men nor yet this extraordinary enthusiasm that makes Dublin this evening so remarkable. It is this: the land is all at peace, but the city has about it all the insignia of war; her ordinary garrison is not above three thousand, and yet in her streets and within her walls this evening are at least four times twenty thousand troops trained and prepared for battle; she is the capital of a British province and the 80,000 do not march under the English flag; her people hate the English soldiery, and yet they fondly fraternize with the new troops; her walls so used to the echoes of English martial music, no longer fling back that tow de row for which the British grenadiers have been distinguished, but her very skies are rolling and resounding with the strong, stern melody of the Irish Volunteers. These Irish soldiers, racy of the soil, keep easy order in the vast crowds. Round about the Parliament House the crush is dreadful; but the civilians love the soldiers and the passage to the House requires no bayonet pushing nor horse forays to keep it clear. Carriage after carriage, each with its legislative occupant rolls by, and cheer suc-

ceeds cheer as member follows member, for on this evening of gladness Irish generosity makes no distinction between ancient friends and ancient foes. But hark ! what is this ? A shout arises loud and joyous and mighty as if all the oppressed of earth had found one voice to welcome their Deliverer ; even the Volunteers forget the systematic silence of their soldier training ; and the whole heart of an entire nation and the whole strength of a nation's army thunders forth the name of GRATTAN. In comes the carriage with the chosen man ; slowly, proudly, solemnly it moves between lines of the Volunteers. Its solitary occupant worn with illness, white with toil, bows awkwardly and abruptly to either side ; the small sharp eyes of him are struggling not to soften ; the curved strong mouth of him locks teeth and lips in a stern effort to see unmoved ; but as the carriage stops and the solitary occupant, swinging his long arms, struggles hurriedly up the granite steps, on through the granite corridors, the ushers and the men at arms can see that instinct is more powerful than will, and that those eyes which never feared the face of man are now streaming with overpowering tears. Ah ! dear, dear Grattar, kindly Irish of the Irish—all our own !

Inside the House of Commons the scene is even for that brilliant period, particularly magnificent. Every member in his place and the representative of royalty, the courtly cunning Duke of Portland is on the throne. Round about the vast Rotunda of the Commons Room, the galleries are thronged with the rank and fashion of a gay and splendid metropolis ; and yet, so hushed in expectancy of some great event, is all that vast assemblage that, as an eye witness describes it—one can hear the nervous fidgets of Portland's fingers—and the impatient shuffling of the shoes of Harry Flood. The moment is indeed one big with the fate of Ireland. It is now more than two years since the Irish Parliament, under the intelligible inspiration and stern leadership of the Volunteers, has declared that Ireland was never made to be a province, and that a province she shall never be ; that the claim to legislate for her advanced by the British Parliament is as illegal as it is impudent ; and that for her no power on earth can make laws to bind her but her own Parliament, and her own king. That declaration has been transmitted to the folk at Westminster ; along with it the secret lovers of Westminster have transmitted very alarming reports of these stern men who had marched from Dungannon ; and even now, when the answer to that declaration is about to be pronounced by the English Viceroy, James

Napper Tandy, has certain cannon with certain inscriptions about their necks so planted that if these two or three thousand English grenadiers who yet remain for the protection of Ireland, exhibit any desire to show their scarlet on College Green, they shall be relieved of all military burthen in the shortest military time and promptitude. The Duke of Portland at last rises. His message is very brief. In the very first sentence he announces that the Irish have won the game, and that the King, Lords and Commons of Great Britain have acceded without reserve to the declaration of the Irish Parliament, and have acknowledged officially the Independence of Ireland. And now it is Grattan's turn. He is now just six and thirty years of age; but he looks older by at least a dozen years. His face is not by any means a handsome face; not made according to any model that painters or young ladies have ever loved. But it is essentially a face of power and of power that looks as if it had declared everlasting war against knavery and injustice. There is a terrible strength in the intense mouth, terrible pride in the intense eyes, terrible daring in the knotted and grappling brows, and over the whole visage there is that awful self-forgetfulness which only comes from long pondering in the darkness, or long watching with the stars. As the man rises—and he rises with a painful effort which seems spasmodic—the body of him looks to be small and shrunken; below the middle height, spare and bony, and as, lifting himself erect, he stretches out his uplifted hand, the fingers seem spare and knotted as an eagle's claw. For the first two or three minutes, says an on-looker, you can hardly keep from laughing, so awkward is the figure, so uncouth is the gesture, but gradually the man's voice asserts itself; soul is left alone with soul; and you are smitten through heart and brain with such a strength of speech as never since was heard except from Mirabeau, or been heard before except from the great Demosthenes. The stillness is terrible as of death and the judgment day; and out through it, as in jets of liquid fire, there dart thoughts, sharp and strong as Spartan shafts, that always hit, and when they hit destroy. At last he sits down, shaken terribly in every limb, and at once there arises from all that vast audience such a rapture of applause as tells even the crowds in Grafton street, and along the quays, that Grattan had triumphed and Ireland at last is free. And so from one end to the other of Dublin city, on this night of 1782, men shake hands with one another, laugh, weep, fling their caps on high,

and thunderous shout after thunderous shout proclaims the praises of Henry Grattan and the Irish Volunteers.

And who is this young man, old at thirty-six whom a whole nation thus singles out as the fit object of its most enthusiastic love? From his birth to that high point at which we see him, his story is soon told. Born in Dublin City, of parents who ranked among the aristocracy, and who drew their blood from Anglo-Norman sources, he had passed his boyhood and his early manhood with many indications both in school and college, that he was destined for great things. He was in truth, essentially a notable. A great lover of books, but still a greater lover of the fields and mountains, there was in him a strange admixture of the scholar who lives to learn, and of the poet who lives to feel. Rash, wild, wayward, fitful, with a spice of the dare-devil in his actions, and in his manner a full flavor of eccentricity, he sought few friendships, made many, and those friends he made, he grappled to his heart with hooks of steel. Like all men worth knowing he was ambitious, and like all men worth knowing he made no secret of his ambition. But he could not for a time decide, at what his ambition should precisely aim. Poetry was the first thing which he seriously attempted, and poetry was the thing for which some of his biographers think he was most specially fitted. But these writers are scarcely serious. For, first of all, his poetical productions of which remain to us a few specimens, are below mediocrity, and secondly, while John Stuart Mill's opinion remains true, as probably it will ever remain, that, namely, an orator thinks for others and a poet thinks for himself, a poet Grattan could never be. This Grattan himself very soon discovered. And so we quickly find him abandoning his melancholy, his day-dreaming, his foolish fits of versification, his foolish plagiarism of the style of Pope and all the thousand and one peculiarities which have ever been characteristic of modern toilers up Parnassus, and he is seeing mumbling speeches along the streets, standing before some gate-post that he addresses as Mr. Speaker, and pronouncing his formal ladies and gentlemen to the strong oaks, and the slim beeches, about Rathfarnham and Rathgar. Later on he has some idea of becoming a Protestant clergyman, (and a Protestant of the Protestants he always was), but making acquaintance with the speeches of the elder Pitt and knowing that in his own country law was the fit apprenticeship for legislation, we discover him studying at London to prepare himself for the Bar. But the Bar is for him only a training

place for his selected calling, and his selected calling is to be an orator. Did he desire distinction at the expense of patriotism he would have gone, as went the great Sheridan and the greater Burke, to give his genius to an alien people and to raise his voice in alien halls. But Grattan was made of sterner and homelier stuff. And so in 1776 we find him in a position where he can prove his patriotism and test his power, member for the Borough of Charlemont in the Irish House of Commons in College Green.

But the Irish Parliament of which Grattan became a member had ceased long since to be anything but a Parliament in name. By an act passed in the reign of Henry VII. and usually called Poyning's Act, no law could originate in the Irish Lords or the Irish Commons; and by another act passed in the reign of George I. power was given to the British Parliament to legislate for Ireland by British Statutes. Then England played her usual game. Every law was so framed as to ruin her Irish colony and to enrich her English self, and the complaints of a Yorkshire village was considered sufficient excuse for killing restrictions on Irish trade. The result to Ireland was utter beggary. Ireland's people became paupers, her ports became the possession of seaweed and shell-fish, and in her city streets, and on her country highways, men and women were walking with no secret for the solution of life's problem, but to lie down and die.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, mark well whom all this directly affected. Ever since the twelfth century there had been in Ireland two races, and ever since the sixteenth century there had been in Ireland two religions. We may call them broadly the native Catholics and the colonial Protestants. The policy of England towards these two parties had always been shaped with the same design, and that design was to plunder Ireland as effectually and as permanently as possible. The Catholic natives being the original proprietors of the soil, were the immediate prey, and as long as the Protestant Colonists served to effect their plunder, the Protestant Colonists were by the Imperial rulers highly favored. But in course of time and by processes that are known and not easily forgotten, two results occurred. In the first place, the native Catholics were socially and politically extinguished, so that, as Dean Swift said, if you wanted to find the native Irish gentry you would have to seek them in the cellars of the Coal Quays and the slums of the Liberties. In the second place the Protestant Colonists increasing in number, and at-

taining by force or fraud to the proprietorship of all the land, they became a power which as long as it remained loyal to England, could keep the Catholic Celts in subjection, but which if it desired to relinquish the beauty of England's embraces might make the English footing in Ireland very insècure. But England then was the England of all history. Then and always was avarice her predominant passion, and for some miserable gain in the present, she was ready to relinquish her best friendships ~~of~~ the future. Her American Colonies which might still be her most splendid provinces, she higgled with and cheated, and robbed, till these stern children of hers in New England, finding out at last that her love of them meant love of their inheritance, flung her angrily from their home and raised up that Great Republic which, though imperfect it be, still lives for all tyrannies, a warning and a doom. The very same policy of selfishness was followed in Ireland. England robbed and cheated her Irish Colonists, as she robbed and cheated her colonists in New England. And in both cases there was this aggravation that it was her own children who had followed her own teachings and worked her own work that she turned to plunder. The Catholic Celts of Ireland had long since had nothing to lose, but the Protestant English who colonized Ireland had much of which they wished to retain possession; and these latter, regardless as ever of affinities of religion and affinities of race, England now turned to destroy. But as in America so in Ireland, England's policy met with opposition. In the Irish Parliament, about the close of the eighteenth century, there was a fair minority who did not intend, English Colonists as they were, being robbed without resistance. And to this minority which we may call the Anglo-Irish party, Henry Grattan entering upon public life, gave all his eloquence and all his soul.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to have it distinctly understood, that the party with which Grattan became thus connected was not in any true sense of the terms, Irish or National at all. Thus did the case stand. In Ireland there was a popoulation at that time of about four millions. Of these nearly a million were English Colonists, more than three millions were Irish Celts. The English Colonists were all Protestants, the Irish Celts, three millions in number were Catholics almost to a man. But these three million Celtic Catholics were in all senses outside the Pale. They were socially and politically and religiously proscribed, they were robbed, starved and murdered by the most infamous of laws and

not a hand did the Grattan party of nearly one million strong lift up to help them, until—mark this—until that party began itself to be plundered and until the Imperial robber from beyond the channel from plundering its slaves turned to plunder its children. As we shall see, among these Protestants of English extraction, who formed what I call the Anglo-Irish party Grattan was a grand exception. But the fact remains certain that not patriotism but self-preservation against robbery, evoked the Revolution of 1782. Had England only restrained her greed, had she not stretched her hands to plunder those whom she herself had sent to plunder others, the penal laws would have enjoyed impunity, the three million Catholic Celts would be still proscribed and the world would have wanted that immortal Irish eloquence which careless people call patriotic, but which was simply the cry of a million Englishmen who had plundered Ireland, and who desired the plunder which they had immorally acquired they should be permitted peacefully to enjoy. If from that cry the Catholic Celt eventually derived a benefit, he may thank Providence, but taking them in bulk he need not thank the men of '82.

At the time when Grattan joined the Anglo-Irish party there was both at home and abroad a happy conjuncture of affairs. The American Colonies had just asserted their independence; had just asserted it because of the very same grievances under which the Anglo-Irish party laboured, and had just through the utter ruin of Cornwallis made their independence secure. In Europe, England had her hands inconveniently full. Such was the drain upon her army for foreign service that she could scarcely spare a man for the defence of her beloved Irish province at home. In a moment of, for Ireland providential blessing the rumour arose that the French were about to attempt a landing on Irish shores; in a moment of, for England fatuous imbecility the Irish, that is the Protestant Colonists in Ireland, were informed that they must defend themselves. To the Celtic Catholics, the three million starving serfs, a French invasion could neither then nor at any time be particularly alarming; but it was not so with the English Protestants on Irish soil. Ireland was their legalized plunder, and their plunder, however they might deny it to the proper owners, they would not (and here they were right) hand over to a newer and perhaps worse plunderer than they. And so in all parts of Ireland the English Colonists began to arm, began to train themselves for war. Without entering into details

which do not concern me now, I may say that the new army of Anglo-Irish was fully equipped, officered and trained, that its officers were many of them veterans of foreign wars, that Catholics were at first utterly, at all times almost utterly excluded from their ranks, that nevertheless a kindly feeling began to exist between the proscribed Celts and the armed Anglo-Irish, and that by the year 1779 there was in Ireland an Anglo-Irish army bearing the really erroneous but still really ominous title of the Irish Volunteers.

Now, it was just a few months after Grattan's entry into Parliament, that the volunteers began to enroll. To him, as to many others, it was at once apparent what, in balancing accounts with England, a splendid weight was here to fling into the Irish scale. England's difficulty says O'Connell is Ireland's opportunity. The principle in that saying was well known to Grattan and to those whom by courtesy we call the patriots of his time. The Volunteers were encouraged, their enrollments was urged with all Grattan's unequalled energy, their spirit was quickened and strengthened with all Grattan's unequalled zeal. The English Parliament began to take alarm, began to throw obstacles in the way, began to play the favorite English game of sowing dissensions in the camp of their foes. But the fire had taken; taken in the dry wood and not the green; and no power on earth could stop the conflagration. The Volunteers were at length ready for action and for use. Grattan used them. The first step was to rid the land of English monopolists and to remove the restrictions on Irish trade. That was quickly done. When 80,000 men trained and equipped and resolute for war marched along with certain metallic orators in front bearing about their necks the text—*Free Trade or else—some of our oratory*—that is a kind of speech very easy to understand and very effective in eliciting a favorable reply. Free Trade was granted. But though the robber with a revolver at his breast may disgorge his plunder, he is not the less a robber still, and when the revolver is again put by he may be disposed to betake himself to his old pursuits. The trade of Ireland has been ruined by English law, and though English law, in sore difficulties, had removed the cause of ruin, yet English law, the difficulties over, might replace the cause of the ruin once more. English legislation for Ireland had been Ireland's destruction, and while England retained the power to legislate for Ireland, that power might commence its destructive work again. That power must next go. And so the stern eloquence

of the Volunteer cannon was again employed, and England was offered a selection between such eloquence and the free admission of Irish legislative independence. It was a sore dilemma for our Imperial sister. Neither horn was a particularly safe situation, and neither horn did she desire to choose; and so with an imperial humility, in her most unusual, she asked delay. But she had now a man to deal with, who was blessed with a providential impatience. To all deprecation on the part of English statesmen, to all remonstrance on the part of his own weaker friends, Grattan's sole reply was *no time, no time*. And so, on this evening of 1782 when we first see him, just two years after the great convention at Dungannon, it has been admitted by our Imperial sister, that only the Irish Commons, Lords and King have power to make laws for Ireland; and the Irish, meaning thereby the Protestant Colonists of Ireland, have in two years, and by the stern action of 80,000 armed men, achieved for Ireland complete and perfect Legislative Independence.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, we are arrived on ground where, both for you and me, cautious walking is extremely necessary. The fact is this, the change of Parliament and of the existing constitution was effected in Ireland by a body of armed men menacing physical revolution, and the real, though not the nominal, leader of that armed body was Henry Grattan. Out of that fact two questions arise. And these questions, if we wish to understand Grattan's position, we must examine cautiously and in some detail.

The first question is one which, in our times, is rarely considered, but which in Grattan's time was warmly debated. It is this: the Volunteers had permission to enrol only for the defence of Ireland against the enemies of the English Crown; it was with that express stipulation that their enrolment was allowed to proceed; it was with the express understanding that only against foreign invasion would the Volunteers be employed that their organization by Grattan was at all sanctioned. But no sooner were they ready than they were used against England herself; were used to force from England what England did not wish to give, and the man who so used them was Henry Grattan. A question then is, was not Grattan then guilty of political trickery and national deception? At first blush the sole answer possible would seem to be an answer in the affirmative. And yet—mark this, for it is very important—every Irishman who has ever written or spoken about it has given a negative

reply. Grattan was not guilty of political trickery, and that has been the answer of men of all classes and of all creeds, of priests and of politicians, of barristers and of bishops, of judges who knew the law, and of religious ministers who ought to know the Prophets. But still against such an answer all appearances are strong. What, therefore, is said to clear these appearances away? By one and all Grattan is defended on the clear ground that what he enrolled the Volunteers to take was only what was the clear right of Ireland; that insisting upon her legislative independence, Ireland was simply insisting upon her own. That answer I must accept as being the answer of better men and better Catholics than I. It is the answer of no less a man than Father Burke.

But observe that answer. It is that for the accomplishment of her Legislative Independence in '82 Ireland had a right to use force of arms. But that what was right in 1782, is wrong in 1875, is not self-evident. There is of course a point of difference between the periods. The Union has since been passed and passed by an Irish Parliament. But the Act of Union has been by the ablest English legists pronounced not binding, and the reasoning of Lord Plunkett, that the Irish Parliament had no power to vote away a Constitution over which the people gave that Parliament no absolute control, will to most men appear conclusive. Therefore, following the highest and most respected authority, we find that the Volunteer movement of '82 was not a criminal movement. The inference is apparently natural, and is often made, that a similar movement would not be criminal in 1875.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, that last conclusion, namely, the lawfulness of a physical revolution in Ireland now, no priest and no man who understands Catholic theology can maintain. Father Burke, least of all, has made no appearance of defending it. He has on the contrary given it his clearest and strongest disapproval. There must, therefore, be some principle which neutralizes our previous reasoning and which proves that a man may hold the lawfulness of the Volunteer movement in '82, and yet hold that a similar movement in our times would not be lawful. Such a principle can, I think, be found. And it, in defence of Grattan, I am concerned to supply here. To his own face he was once called an impeached traitor, and many still speak in his praise, who yet hold principles that should make them call him a traitor still. I am bound to show that treason was not a crime that could be written against Grattan's name. And I show it in this way.

First of all, when Grattan became a member of the Irish Parliament, Ireland lay robbed of all her rights. Her property had been stolen, and so had her legislative independence. There never was a man more surely despoiled by Dick Turpin or Claude Duval than had Ireland been by the sister isle. More, for the want of those very things of which she had been plundered, Ireland was dying and nearly dead. More, to regain her lost property she had only a single way, for her plunderer was safe above the reach of law. Like the Wexford people of '98 she had to fight for self-preservation, and Father Burke has declared that not only were those Wexford men guiltless in their course, but that if he, Father Burke, were in the same condition as Father Murphy, the great preacher of the Dominicans would have become the great pikeman of the Shelmaliers. What justified Father Murphy justified Henry Grattan. In a civilized land, which has its laws and its executive to enforce them, a man must ordinarily, though at the expense of much impatience, recover his stolen property by legal means; but when there is no law and no executive, men are thrown back into that simpler state where accounts are settled by processes readier and more intelligible than any known to political legislation; what there is no law to ensure them they can ensure for themselves; what there is no law to restore to them they can take with those first agents of restoration, their own strong arms. But that, in Grattan's time, was precisely the case with Ireland. England had robbed, was robbing her, England had starved, was starving her, from day to-day. There was no chance of law that would prevent eventual murder, and if there were a chance Ireland was too nigh to death to be able to afford to wait for legislation. Her proper course, her only course, was plain. It was the course followed by Henry Grattan. And it was to gather her children round about her and to say, not in the name of the God of battles, but in the name of the God of Justice, up with the Volunteers.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I hope you all know by this time what is my reading of Irish History. I hope you all know that I succumb to no man in love for Ireland. But I hope you know that stronger than my love for Ireland is my love for truth. Now, since 1872 the state of Ireland has vastly changed. The causes which justified the Volunteers exist in any aggravating state no more. Ireland is not starved nor starving; Irishmen are not proscribed; England has shewn herself not unwilling to give redress when it is applied for in

fair and legal guise; and most of all Irishmen in Ireland, who know their own affairs much better than Irishmen in New York, are willing to balance accounts by the plain processes of peaceful legislation. Circumstances have changed. With them have changed the obligations of Ireland. Revolution by physical means would be in Ireland at the present day, not only what we all know to be, a folly, but it would be a folly which on no principle of morality could be defended. It is the doctrine only of very young men, or of men whose gray hairs hide perennial youth. It is a doctrine which is in itself attractive and which every Irishman has a tendency to hold, and which every Irishman must be only gently chided for holding. As a priest who knows the doctrines of his Church, I can say no less; as an Irishman who understands his country's history and his country's character I will say no more. And I say so much only to bring out some rational defence of Henry Grattan. Grattan's defence is that in his day Ireland had to select between death and armed revolution. Englishmen will find it hard to discover a defence as good for the revolution of 1642 or the revolution of 1689.

But there is yet another principle upon which Grattan may be defended, it is a principle extremely plain. The movement of '82 was by the Parliament itself declared, though tacitly, perfectly legal and perfectly fair. The Volunteers were not treated as rebels; they were treated as men who did what they had a perfect right to do. Their demands were answered by clear concessions, and their manner of making these demands was so far from being blamed, that the Volunteers themselves were not even asked to disenroll. To say that thereby England herself gave a legal precedent to physical revolution would be saying what is dangerous, but what can scarcely be proved to be untrue. With that I have no concern. But the fact is certain, and with this fact only am I engaged, that the British Parliament formally sanctioned, nay, formally endorsed the action of Grattan and the Irish Volunteers. And so on Grattan's character there rests no stain.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have taken Henry Grattan at his best, or at least, at his most successful period. In his entire after life he never got beyond the grandeur of our selected evening of 1782. He never again came near it. After that first success indeed he never again succeeded at all. Well nigh forty years more were allotted to him, and in all these forty years he had sickness, sorrow, struggle enough to break a hundred souls, but success and the

rapturous pleasures of success he had no more. In his case the usual course of Providence was reversed. The men whom God destines for high position have usually to accept a contract which to humanity must appear hard. The best and brightest of their years they must give up to painful and plodding labour; and only when their hair is grey and their eyes are dim, and all the fresh enthusiasm of youth is over, do the rewards which at thirty might exalt, but which at sixty only sadden, begin to come. The crown of oak or the crown of laurel, serves most frequently only to hide their baldness. But Henry Grattan! his triumph was decreed him when he had youth and fulness of vigor to enjoy it, and failure was postponed to these wiser and wearier years when even success is only failure, and when no disappointment is seriously heavy, because no hope is seriously strong. Grattan's history from 1782 to 1820, is, of all histories, to me, the saddest. But it must be, though, briefly told. And it must be told because it much more than the history of his triumph is instructive to every man who in whatever way has to work for Ireland.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Act of Independence was, it must always be remembered, an Act won from England's fears. Of this the English statesmen of the time did not even attempt concealment. It was, therefore, an Act, in the framing of which English statesmen would be naturally insidious, and every clause of which the Irish patriots should have fenced round with all the clearness and all the finality requisite to shut out subsequent cavilling. This, it must be said, Grattan did not do. He was deficient in two qualities which O'Connell possessed in the highest perfection—practical shrewdness in the details of business, and perpetual distrust of men whose interest it was to outwit him. I, for one, cannot think the less of Grattan that he had both the large carelessness of genius and its lofty generosity; but genius is often dangerous, and with more common-place qualities Grattan would have been a safer statesman. The Act of Independence was no sooner passed than it was discovered to be defaced by a serious flaw. I cannot say that they who proclaimed the discovery did so on purely patriotic grounds—nor does the conduct of Flood, who most strongly insisted upon it—show in a light altogether lovable. But the fact is that Flood did raise an objection against the wording of the Act, and that technically the objection rests upon the best of grounds. In this way: the Act of Independence was strictly but the repeal of the two special

statutes in one way or another decreeing legislative union between England and Ireland. To repeal these statutes was simply to leave things as things were before the statutes were enacted. But, as Flood argued, before the enactments, though Englishmen did not legislate for Ireland, they yet claimed the right to do so. Therefore, as Flood argued, Grattan should have insisted, not only that these statutes should have been repealed, but that England should formally and forever disclaim all right to make laws for Ireland; and the Act of Independence, not securing that latter obligation, gave England this loophole of escape, that when her existent difficulties were over she might at any time reclaim the right which she had never renounced, and might renew the union. This flaw was subsequently remedied by the stern energy of Flood, but its existence was the occasion of evils that for Ireland were disastrous. It was the occasion of putting Flood and Grattan against one another as mortal foes, and it was the occasion of turning attention away from circumstances upon attention to which the fate of Ireland rested. It caused the bitterest disunion among the Irish leaders, and the most stupid blundering in the Irish policy. For, first of all, the quarrel between Flood and Grattan—though out of it we have derived some magnificent efforts of eloquence—was one of the most deplorable events in all the deplorable history of Ireland. And it was deplorable, not only as weakening, by disunion, the whole Irish party, but more especially as souring and embittering, and thereby rendering less and less efficient the sensitive soul of Grattan. Good cause he had to be embittered. During the few months immediately succeeding the passing of the Act of Independence he was undoubtedly the most popular man in Ireland. He was probably the object of a larger love and a larger enthusiasm than had ever been exhibited by any nation to any of her sons. If ever human admiration was an unconscious idolatry it was so in his case. The populace, Protestant and Catholic, looked up to him as to a demigod; the Parliament worshipped him in the only way known to Parliaments, by a vote of money worthy of an emperor, and even from the holy of holies, beyond the channel, the royal oracle proclaimed that there was no God but God, and that Grattan was His prophet. But the patriot's story is, as Browning puts it, an old story.

1.

It was roses, roses, all the way,

And myrtle flung in my path like mad;

The house-roofs seemed to swell and sway,

The church-spires blazed such flags they had,

A year ago on this very day.

* * * * *

II.

I go in the rain, and (more than needs)
 The tight rope cuts my wrists behind;
 I think, besides, my forehead bleeds,
 For they fling at me, whoe'er has a mind,
 Staves and stones for my year's misdeeds.

With Grattan it was even worse. His triumph was scarcely three months old when the populace, so very loving but so very mutable, hooted him through the streets. The sarcasms of Flood were translated by the savagery of the slums, and "Grattan the Incorruptible," was accused by the reeking rabble, of selling both England and Ireland for so many promises, or so many pounds. The mob, thank God, was not altogether an Irish mob, it was only a mob of Englishmen living in Ireland; even it, too, considering the vast power of Flood's eloquence, was not much to blame; but the evil was accomplished, Grattan's soul became salt and bitter as the sea, his mind became warped and sullen; he wrapped himself round in a proud passionate reserve, and though he still loved Ireland as no other man had ever loved her, he lost all of that surpassing patience, all that glorious forbearance, with which O'Connell worked his wonders, without which no man can permanently serve the Irish people, which is the main quality we look for in the great Irish Leader who has yet to rise.

The point that severed Flood and Grattan was indeed soon settled, and except technically, of no importance. The Renunciation Act on which Flood so strongly insisted was passed with ease; England formally admitted that she did not possess and never had possessed the right to legislate for Ireland; but the great Irish Leaders were made enemies forever, and whereas the powers of both should have been united to make the Act of Independence certain and secure, the dissensions of both served to make the Act only a means of riveting more effectually the chains of Ireland. For, that Ireland should have an Independent Parliament would be a blessing or a curse precisely in so far as the Parliament, at that time, was worthy or unworthy. Now the Parliament, at that time was almost as unworthy as it could well be. It was so elected that a few people, and these of English proclivities, could pack it as they pleased. A parliamentary reform, large and searching, was just the one thing that could make the work of Grattan and his Volunteers permanently useful. Had Irish patriots only insisted upon such reform; had they been as

steadfast in promoting as were English statesmen in preventing it there need have been no "Ninety-eight" nor "Forty-eight," nor any other unhappy blood shedding to sow more thickly the awful seeds of hatred and revenge. But the Volunteers were disbanded and died away; the Irish leaders squabbled and swore and fought duels in Bully's Acre while English statesmen were quietly and coolly weaving a net round Ireland; Irish members of Parliament were bought and bargained for day by day; Grattan sulked and went into solitude; Curran, whose great heart always hated the society of littleness, shunned an assembly whose members had already in their pockets the price of their country's blood; and Castlereagh might work his work in safety and the union was secure. At the last moment, indeed, Grattan made a gigantic effort; appeared suddenly in that old house on College Green; thundered forth "these iron words that thrilled like the clash of spears;" but the good moment had been allowed to pass; even Grattan's eloquence, even that uniform of the Volunteers which he wore that evening was useless now, and in 1800 Henry Grattan stood, himself from pain and sorrow but a ghost of the man of '82; he stood over his country's corpse, to wail out above her the long pent agonies now culminating in the death caoine of despair with only this thing to say but this a thing that rings in our hearts forever, that he at least had been faithful to his country's freedom and would be faithful even in his country's fall.

And from that 1800 till his death in 1820, the life of Grattan became what his country's life had become already, almost a blank. The Irish Parliament, where he had been so potent, was no more, and, in the English Parliament, though his voice was often heard, his power was next to nothing. Still he was true to the old colors and the old cause. Of one thing especially Catholics cannot, without the gravest ingratitude, ever become unmindful. From the beginning to the end of his political career he was not only the fast friend but the unwearied advocate of Catholic Emancipation, and never did his wondrous words strike more powerfully, or cut more keenly, than when he assailed these ignorant bigots who with a religion of yesterday and a faith about which no two of them could come to an agreement, called idolatry and blasphemy the faith and the religion which had been lived for and died for by all the best and brightest, the noblest hearts and the most luminous souls of 1500 trying years. This zeal of Gratten for Catholic Emancipation

was no mere incidental impulse dictated by passing whim or passing interest: it was a continued quality of his life from its commencement to its end. He had it too and gave it fearless expression when to be rid of it, or to conceal it, would have been far more expedient. In 1780, at a meeting of the Volunteers, the same meeting which struck the first effective blow for Irish Independence, one of the two resolutions which Grattan proposed, and which his magnificent eloquence made pass successfully, was a resolution of sympathy with the oppressed professors of the Catholic religion. Later on, when Ireland had her Parliament, a corrupt one, but still her own, Grattan brought before it the just claims of Catholics; and though these claims were, by the stupid bigotry of a majority of his colleagues, successfully resisted, still a cry was raised not easy to quell, and fated when echoed by O'Connell, to command at last Catholic Emancipation. Still later, when merely a member of the English Legislature, and no longer a power in his own land, the great man did not forget his suffering countrymen; and his last journey from Dublin to London, the journey that was to be ended by his death, was against all advice of friends and attendants, undertaken to cast his vote and to raise his voice once more for those whose creed he could not embrace, but whose religious liberty he held dearer than his own existence. And all this he did in the face of prejudices which he could not help but feel, and against an education which it required a gigantic power to struggle; taught to believe that Catholics were idolaters, and Celts were predestined slaves, the man's instincts were stronger than the man's beliefs; his first nature was stronger than his second; and rising high above the thick ignorance and the thoughtless teaching of his time he proclaimed the principle that religious persecution is political crime, and that to shackle conscience is to shame humanity.

And thus did he make himself the immortal model of all those who have to live with people with whose religious belief they can have no sympathy. The Protestant was often tempted, as Grattan was often tempted, to treat a religion of 200 millions and of 1800 years as though it was a large stupidity, and as though the *Daily Witness* were a loftier authority than Thomas of Aquin or the Eagle of Meaux or John Henry Newman; and because he thinks it stupid to assume God's office of visiting its stupidity with persecution; but the Protestant, especially the Irish Protestant, remembers Henry Grattan, and he recognizes it is a worthier thing to be on the side of that mighty man than to be on the side of the mad and murderous

rabble of Toronto. Nor is the Catholic without his lesson. Among the many changes which time and Providence have brought us, they have brought us this, that we who were once oppressed are often times in power, and many a time do we feel the impulse coming surely from below, to fulfil the precept of retaliation, and to visit the sorrows of our fathers upon the sons of the men who shed their blood and mocked their tears. But were it only for the sake of Grattan, to such impulses we Irish Catholics never will give way, in gratitude to that one just we will pardon all the guilty. And if to-morrow our own government were in our own hands; if to-morrow we Catholics had universal sway in Ireland, not one spirit of revenge would we allow among us; not one rack or pitch-cap or picket stake would we employ; but remembering that the Protestant Grattan once fought to free us, we should to all our separated brethren give, as only Irish can give, the right hand of fellowship, and the Protestant Race and the Protestant Religion would be as free among us as though Elizabeth had never plundered, and Cromwell had never butchered, and Protestantism had never plotted to cut out from the world's records the Catholic worship and the Irish name.

And by this passionate zeal for religious freedom, Grattan has not only left a model to us all, but unto himself he has won an immortal renown. It alone it is that will perpetuate his memory. Eloquent indeed he was, and with an eloquence of the first order; but even eloquence of the first order is an unsafe passport to immortality; and when it is employed, as Grattan's was employed, on subjects whose interest is not perennial but only passing, its music gradually dies away till only echoes of it remain among the far off mountains, and these echoes only find some solitary student's ears. Brave he was, and with that rare bravery which conquered defeat; but such a quality of bravery is no novelty with Irishmen, and it, too, like most other good things in a man, is often interred with the bones of its possessor, and always slips silently away from the memories and the mouths of humanity. Wise he was, and good and pure; but wisdom and goodness and purity, though rare, in reality, are in estimation plentiful, and as Anistites is forgotten, Grattan's moral greatness would be most unlikely to immortalize Grattan's name. Nor would his great ardent patriotism ensure him perpetual renown; for patriots have now come to be very common, and amid the vast armies of muscular patriotic men that rise up every year to stock the space between the present and the past, it is

not very easy to catch a glimpse of the little man of '82. But his championship of religious freedom, in the circumstances by which he was surrounded, will not let him die. For such a championship in such circumstances has rarely been seen among the children of men. It reveals at once a lofty nobleness that belongs not to a nation or a time, but to the sons of Heaven and the Immortals. And therefore is it that in Grattan's grave I see a kind of providential destiny. His dust lies not in Ireland among the people of his love; but in England among the people whom his great generous heart could never hate, but whom his fiery eloquence described as rich with the robberies of all the universe. Even so; it is better so. Only an imperial city, mightiest of all the world, like mighty London, is worthy of the dust of Henry Grattan; and only when the fleets of the Thames become the fleets of the Liffey should the dust of Grattan be laid in Irish soil. And so standing in Westminster above the ashes of the man of '82, I could shed no tears; not for Grattan, for even to his dust has God given a glory; none for Ireland, for out among that roar of London, and in through these dim aisles of Westminster, I heard a voice proclaiming that Ireland would yet be worthy to give to Henry Grattan his last and fittest grave.





